

EXPLORING WORLD HISTORY  
**LITERARY  
ANALYSIS**

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# Who, What, How, Why, and Why Not: A Primer for Literary Analysis of Fiction

People read books. Some books (think Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and Jane Austen) are still widely read decades and even centuries after they were written. Many, many books (think of the highly forgettable ones you see in used book sales—over and over) are a flash in the pan or are even less noticeable. What's the difference? Is it just that most people like this book and most people dislike that one? Sort of, but it is more nuanced than that.

**Literary analysis** is studying the parts of a work of literature (such as plot, setting, characters, and narration) to see how the author uses them to create the overall meaning of the work as a whole. Professors, teachers, students, critics, and everyday people analyze works of literature: novels, short stories, poems, and non-fiction. They think about the story or plot of the book, how it develops, the characters in the book, the words and structure that the author uses, and other elements of the work.

People who analyze literature have developed standard methods. Primarily, this involves looking for elements that are found in most literary works. The purpose of literary analysis is to understand how a piece of literature works: how the writer constructs his or her story, and why the work affects readers the way it does.

Did you ever see yourself doing literary analysis? Does the phrase “literary analysis” make washing dishes or chopping firewood seem exciting? I understand. But it is more interesting than it might sound. Think of it as finding the answers to some big questions: “What makes a story good?” “What are the building blocks of great writing?” “Why do I keep thinking about that book and want to read it again?” “What is the difference between a book you stay up late to read and one that should be repurposed as a fire starter?” Even if you don't want to make a lifelong habit of literary analysis, as an educated person you should know the basics of how it works. It can also be kind of fun.

Literary analysis can help you appreciate the power of a work of literature. It can provide you with insights for a deeper appreciation of the next novel (or poem or history) you read. On a practical level, literary analysis is often what a classroom teacher wants students to do in order to understand a book. So literary analysis is good as long as it is a means to a good end and achieves a worthy goal. However, if literary analysis becomes an end in itself, or a way to show how much someone knows or thinks he knows about literature, or something that gets in the way of enjoying a work of literature, it no longer serves a good purpose. In other words, literary analysis has its place; but it is not the purpose of literature.

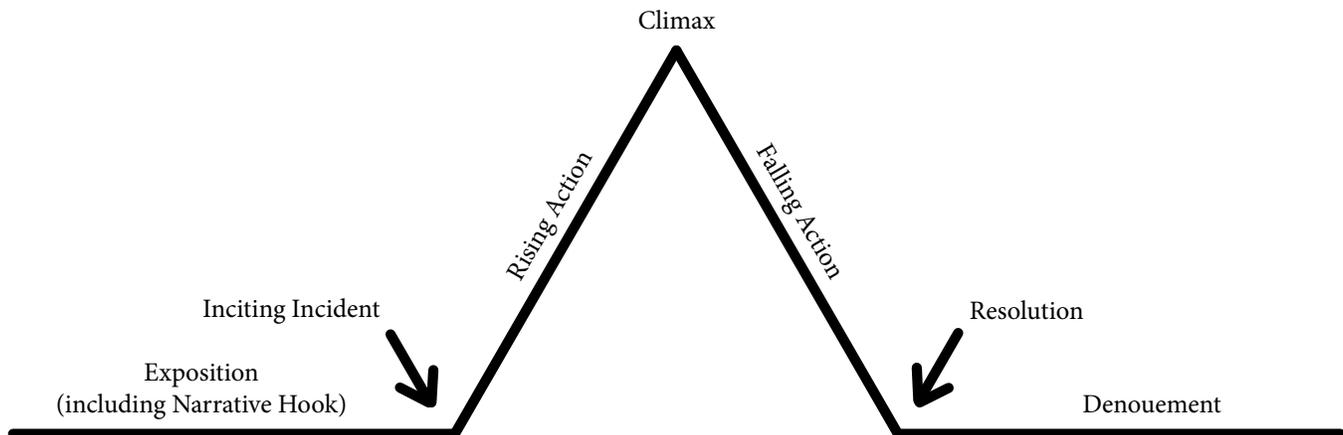
Writers do not write in order to have their work subjected to literary analysis. Nathaniel Hawthorne did not write *The Scarlet Letter*, nor did Charles Dickens write *A Tale of Two Cities*, for English teachers to analyze them to death or so that professors would have material for exams. They wrote because they had stories to tell; they wanted to connect on an emotional level with readers. These authors were successful because they did that well, and this is why their books are considered classic works of literature.

Here are some standard elements of literary analysis.

## Plot

The **plot** is the story of a piece of **fiction**. Fiction is a work of imagined narrated prose, usually either a novel or a short story. The plot is what happens to make it a story.

Gustav Freytag was a nineteenth-century German novelist who found a typical pattern of plot development in Greek and Shakespearean dramas. The same pattern is found in most fictional literature. Freytag depicted it as a pyramid.



The examples below refer to *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

**Exposition:** *laying out the situation and background, introducing the characters. (Within this element will often be a **narrative hook**, an event or description that gets you interested in the story and wanting to read more.)* Four children come to stay in a professor's country home. The narrative hook is when Lucy finds a magic wardrobe in a back room and visits Narnia: what will happen next?

**Inciting incident:** something that gets the story moving.

*Lucy meets the faun, who expresses inner conflict over what he is doing.*

**Rising action:** building drama; each significant event is called a complication.

*All four children go to Narnia, they meet the Beavers, Edmund betrays his siblings to the White Witch, and so forth.*

**Climax:** the single key event or turning point; the moment of greatest tension.

*Aslan sacrifices his life on behalf of Edmund.*

**Falling action:** events that occur as a result of the climax.

*The good and evil creatures in Narnia have a battle.*

**Resolution:** the event in which the main issue is resolved.

*Aslan's side wins. The four children are established as kings and queens.*

**Denouement** (day-new-maw): the finishing out and tying up of the details of the story.

*The four children grow up, rule Narnia, and then return to their own world.*

Freytag's Pyramid is only a typical plot development. It accurately describes the plots of many pieces of fiction, but there are many variations and exceptions. Writers do not necessarily write to the Freytag Pyramid. Don't try to force a work into the pyramid if it doesn't seem to fit. In addition, people will sometimes have different ideas about what is the narrative hook, inciting incident, resolution, or even the climax in a really dramatic story.

The key question to ask about the plot of a piece of literature is, "What is the **conflict**?" What is the issue that the main character needs to resolve? Is it conflict within himself, perhaps between what he wants and what he actually has? Is it a conflict between himself and another character, or between himself and the expectations of others? Is it the conflict of wanting to reach a goal but being unable to do so? What keeps or moves the character out of stability and causes tension? The tension between Pip and Estella is one conflict in *Great Expectations*. The quest for the ring is a continuing conflict in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. A skillful writer

might have several lines of conflict in a work and interweave them into a gripping **narrative**. Conflict and struggle are how we grow as persons, so the conflict in a story is an important way for us to identify with the characters in the story.

The time, place, and social environment of a story is the **setting**. The plot unfolds in these surroundings. Is the story set among the working class of early nineteenth-century England, among fishermen of first-century Israel, among slaves in the southern United States just before the Civil War, or among homeschooling families of twenty-first century America? The setting will affect what characters know, their assumptions and aspirations, and how they act and speak. The geographical setting always impacts the development of the story: isolated mountain villagers will act and speak differently from urban dwellers. The rural and urban settings—and the conflict between them—in *Cry, the Beloved Country* are crucial to the story.

Another key element of the plot is the **structure** of the story, how it is told. A straight **chronological narrative** is simplest, but an author might want to use **flashbacks** (descriptions of events that happened earlier, out of chronological order) and **foreshadowings** (hints at things that will come later) to convey attributes of characters or particular feelings to the story.

**Archetypes** (ARK-eh-types) are typical or standard plot elements, such as a character on a quest, the pursuit of an elusive goal, the loss of innocence, or an initiation into a new situation. Many of the world's most famous works of literature include one or more of these elements because these situations make for a good story. Everyone goes through these times or has these dreams.

## Characters and Characterization

- The **characters** are the people in a story.
- The **protagonist** is the main character of the story (Jo in *Little Women*).
- The **antagonist** is the character who works against the protagonist and provides some degree of conflict (the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*).
- The **confidant** is someone to whom a character reveals his thoughts and motives (Margaret plays this role for Bessy and Mr. Bell plays this role for Margaret in *North and South*).
- The mentor teaches another character about life (Marmee in *Little Women*).
- A **foil** is often a minor character who by being a contrast illuminates another character (for instance, the slick operator who serves to highlight the integrity of the protagonist).
- Other typical characters are the **hero** (Sir Percy Blakeney, the Scarlet Pimpernel), the **scapegoat** (Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*), and the **buddy pair** (Don Quixote and Sancho Panza).
- A **round character** is three-dimensional, one whose personality is well-developed and who has some internal struggles expressed. In other words, he is believable and realistic. David Copperfield is a round character. A **flat character** is not developed in the story (Jethro in *The Cat of Bubastes*). A **stock character** portrays a stereotypical role, such as the cruel stepmother in *Cinderella*, the slow and dimwitted policeman, or the unemotional accountant. A stock character might be round or flat. A **dynamic character** changes during the story (matures or regresses, as Margaret Hale does in *North and South*), while a **static character** does not change (Fanny in *North and South*). A good author uses each character to advance the story in some way, not just to clutter the pages.

**Characterization** is the way that the author reveals the nature and personality of the characters. This is how the author makes a character real. What do you learn about a character in the course of the story? How do you learn about him or her? The narrator might tell the reader about a character (**direct characterization**), or the author might reveal a character's attributes by what the character says or does (**indirect characterization**). Typical methods of indirect characterization include a character's actions and his effect on others, a character's dress and appearance, how he talks and what he says, and the thoughts he reveals. The author might convey information about a character through his interactions with others, by what others say about the character, or by discrepancies between the character's reputation and his real actions or between what he says and what he does. A narrator (and through the narrator the author) might express an evaluation of a character by comments he or she makes. If a character grows or changes, how does the author show this: insights that she gains, experiences that teach her lessons, or by demonstrating different ways of acting or speaking over the course of the story?

Conflict within a character or between characters can be distinct from conflict in the story. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, for example, the conflict between the Defarges and the other French revolutionaries on one hand and the French aristocracy on the other is different from the conflict within Sydney Carton himself. What does a character do about conflict? Does he try to escape it, does he repress it, or does he address it?

## Narrative

**The Narrator.** Who is telling the story? One key element of the narrative is the point of view of the narrator. The narrator might be **first person**, a character in the story. A first person narrator might be a major or a minor character in the story. The character David Copperfield is the first person narrator of the Charles Dickens novel by that name; the first-person narrator Ishmael in *Moby Dick* is a relatively minor character in that book. A narrator might be **third person**, one who is not a character in the story. The narrator might be **omniscient**, meaning that he or she knows the thoughts and motives of each character, or he might be **limited omniscient**, knowing the thoughts and motives of just one person. A narrator might be **objective**, not knowing anything about the inner thoughts of the characters except what the characters themselves reveal. One way to describe an objective narrator is that he knows and conveys only what a camera sees. A rare form of narration is **second person**, by which the author describes the reader himself going through the events of the story. Another rare form of narration is the **stream of consciousness** approach, in which the narrator relates the jumble of his own (or one character's own) thoughts as they occur to him. William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* is told in a stream of consciousness approach.

An author chooses the narrative approach for a reason. In *Great Expectations*, the reader has much more sympathy for Pip, the main character and first person narrator, than he would if the story were told by a third person narrator, although Dickens used third person narrators in many of his works.

**Narrative Mood.** What is the **mood** or **tone** of the narration? Is the narrator light-hearted, angry, skeptical, condescending, or sad and defeated? The mood of the characters might be different from the tone the author conveys. The characters might be harsh and judgmental, but the narrator could be sympathetic to the victims of the harshness. Simon Legree is a harsh character in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; but the author/narrator Harriet Beecher Stowe is sympathetic to Tom, the target of Simon's harshness. The author might have an agenda or cause he is trying to get across through the way the book is narrated. A rare approach is the unreliable narrator

who is so prejudiced that the reader cannot trust what the narrator says and has to filter what the narrator says to determine the truth. It is possible for an author to have a tone or agenda that is different from the tone or agenda of the narrator. For instance, the author might want to condemn the lifestyle of the rich and famous. To do so he makes the narrator so fawning toward and accepting of the rich and famous that it turns the reader off. This is a subtle form of sarcasm as a tone.

**Narrative Style.** An author will use a particular **style**, such as formal or colloquial language, or take a logical or emotional approach to the story. Does the author use **dialog**, which is the recording of direct quotes of conversations between characters, to advance the story?

**Literary Techniques.** How does the author use words to tell his story? He has several tools at his disposal.

- **Imagery** is using descriptive language to convey appearance or other attributes. It is painting pictures with words. Compare “We walked between two large rocks and came to a big field” to “The narrow passage between the towering cliffs opened into a meadow lush with wildflowers.”
- **Simile** is a comparison using like or as. “His encouragement was like a breath of fresh air to me.”
- **Metaphor** is a comparison in which one thing is said to be another. “You are a rock of stability to me.”
- **Symbolism** is the use of one thing to represent another. Literature often uses **archetypical symbols** to convey certain ideas: night often portrays mystery or evil; a mountain can represent an obstacle to overcome; winter and spring can represent death and rebirth.
- **Allegory** is an extended comparison, in which every or almost every character or event represents something else. *Animal Farm* is an allegory of the Russian Revolution.
- **Apostrophe** is addressing someone who is not present or something that is not human. “Caesar, thou art revenged” (from *Julius Caesar*, spoken after Caesar was dead).
- **Synecdoche** (suh-NEK-doh-key) is using a part for the whole. “Ten thousand feet marched down the street to an endless beat of drums” (people marched, not just feet).
- **Metonymy** (meh-TONN-eh-mi) is substituting one term for another because of the close association between the two. “The White House announced a new economic stimulus package today” (meaning the President or an administration official did so, not the physical structure at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C.).
- **Hyperbole** is intentional overstatement. “I think of you a million times a day.”
- **Litotes** (LIH-tuh-teez) is intentional understatement. “His donation to the charity was not insignificant” (meaning it was significant).
- **Irony** is a contrast between appearance and reality. Irony can be situational (a man proposing marriage to a woman in a comical setting such as being stuck in an elevator, or characters trying to keep from laughing out loud in a quiet museum), verbal (one character doing something foolish and another character saying the opposite, such as, “That was an intelligent thing to do!”), or dramatic (the reader knows more than the character does, so the reader knows that it is ironic that the character is doing this because it is fruitless or dangerous).

- **Oxymoron** (ox-ee-MORE-on) is a contradiction in terms. “The silence was deafening.”
- **Paradox** is a phrase or statement that appears to be contradictory but in fact might convey a deep truth. “I know that I know nothing at all.”
- **Antithesis** is putting together two opposite ideas to achieve the effect of a contrast. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”
- **Personification** is the giving of human traits to non-human things. “The trees waited eagerly for the rising of the sun.”
- **Alliteration** is the repetition of the same initial verbal sound. “Billy bounced a ball by the backyard barbecue.” To be more specific: assonance is the repetition of the same vowel sound; consonance is the repetition of the same consonant sound. Alliteration gives rhythm to a statement or phrase that can increase its emotional impact. “And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting/On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door.”

**Topic and Theme.** A book will usually have a topic and a theme. These are two different attributes even though they sound similar. A **topic** is a brief description of the book, such as, “The French Revolution,” “How Lenin’s Communist Russia operated,” or “Life in a nineteenth-century English factory town.” A **theme** can usually be stated in one sentence and often expresses a universal idea that the story conveys. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is about redemption, making something good out of something bad. The theme of *North and South* is prejudice.

How does the author deal with the conflict and the theme? The author might convey his belief that the conflict is a result of the protagonist’s outdated or irrational mindset; if the character would be more open-minded, he would not have this conflict. The theme might be the privilege of the wealthy, which the author approaches with sarcasm because he thinks the wealthy ought not to have such privilege.

## Your Response to the Story

As you read a work of literature, whether fiction, poetry, or non-fiction, interact with the text. Even more, interact with what the text is saying about life, or history, or whatever the topic is, and what the text says to you and about you. Are the plot and characters realistic and plausible? If they are unreal, does the author intend for them to be unreal and does this approach work? How are the characters products of their time and place and social setting and how do they transcend their setting? What is especially meaningful to you in terms of particular scenes, characters, dialog, or overall impact? How does the story make you feel, which is different from what you think about it? How does it make a difference for you?

Literary analysis is helpful when it clarifies how the author constructed the work. You can more deeply appreciate what he or she did and how the work conveys the intended message and mood. However, literary analysis can sometimes be emphasized to the point of making it seem more important than the work itself; and an analyst can come up with ideas about a work that the author never had in mind. Much of literary analysis is and should be subconscious on the part of the reader, the way we enjoy a good meal without over-analyzing all of the individual ingredients (although you should compliment the cook, and, if you are interested, ask how he or she prepared it). As you give thought to literary analysis, you can better appreciate the mental feast offered to you by what you read.

# What Do You Think About What He Thinks?

## A Primer for Analysis of Non-Fiction

A non-fiction article, essay, or book has a different approach from a work of fiction. It will likely make an argument, teach, or convey information. Of course, a work of fiction might also be an attempt to make an argument, teach, or convey information; but non-fiction presents the information and the author's perspective in a straightforward manner. The non-fiction piece might be in the form of a story; but it is a story from real life, as in a biography.

Part of education is considering perspectives other than your own and developing your response to them. In a persuasive work, a writer has something to say that he hopes others will at least consider and perhaps agree with. Even the author of a biography writes for a purpose, not only to inform but perhaps also to convince readers about something regarding his subject: that he was instrumental in a war, or influential in Congress, or had some other significant impact.

By reading a work of non-fiction, you might be confirmed in what you believe about something or you might be convinced that you need to change your opinion. You might obtain more information that helps you have a more realistic perspective on an issue. You shouldn't fear this process. You don't want to cast aside basic truth and fall for every new idea you hear, but part of growing and maturing is gaining a more complete understanding of truth. No one has a grasp of all truth or the perfect application of that truth in every situation. Everyone can grow in some areas of life, whether that means learning more truth or learning the application of the truth you know to more situations. This process is part of growing in what the Bible calls discernment (see Hebrews 5:13-14).

A text can be any written material. We analyze every text that we read, whether it is an encyclopedia article, a book of political commentary, or an advertisement, even if only briefly and subconsciously. As with the analysis of fiction, we don't want to lose the joy of reading by over-analyzing, but it is good to do serious and conscious analysis for several reasons. Analysis will help you understand the meaning and purpose of a text; you might even discern a meaning beneath the surface. It can help you connect the text with its background, such as the time in which it was written or something about the author. You can profitably compare the text with other texts to see which are more consistent and believable. Analyzing a text can help you prove a thesis. A summary of a text is a report of its content, but an analysis of a text is an evaluation of its meaning and significance.

In analyzing a work of non-fiction, you want to ask questions of the text. You probably won't answer every question below about every text, but here are things to consider when analyzing non-fiction:

- What is the author's point or purpose?
- What is the argument he is making?
- What is the motivation for the piece? What problem does it address?
- What evidence or logic does he use to support his thesis?
- What is the context from which the author writes (time, place, point of view, background and experience)?

- What assumptions does the author bring to writing this piece?
- What words or ideas are repeated? These will often be clues to the author's point.
- What word choices seem significant? Does the author use any figures of speech to make his argument more persuasive?
- What is the structure of the text? For instance, *The Art of War* is a series of pithy observations and bits of advice, *Here I Stand* is a scholarly biography, *Bridge to the Sun* is a memoir, and *The Abolition of Man* is based on a series of lectures. How does the author build his argument through the work? How does the structure help make the author's point?
- What are the key passages in the work, and why are they important?
- What is surprising, odd, or troubling in the text? (These parts are likely challenging your current understanding.)
- What contradictions and inconsistencies do you find in the text?
- What assumptions do *you* bring to the text?
- Is the text convincing to you? Why or why not? (It is entirely likely that you will agree with some things and disagree with others.)
- What questions do you have after reading it? What further study do you need to do?

When you write an analysis of a non-fiction work, gather your information, impressions, and answers to these questions, then write a coherent essay that responds to the piece. Depending on the length of your essay, you will probably want to summarize the author's purpose and argument, emphasize the central points as you see them, note where you think the author is correct and where he is mistaken, and where he is effective and where he could have expressed his ideas differently. Keep in mind the nature of your assignment, what the teacher expects from you, and what the reader of your analysis needs to understand about the work you are analyzing and about your response to it.

The author whose work you have read wants you to think. Show that you have thought. Expressing your thoughts on paper indicates how well you understand what he has said and, more importantly, how well you understand your own thoughts about the subject.

## Analysis of Poetry

You cannot read poetry the way you read a novel, a newspaper, a textbook, or other non-fiction writing. Poetry aims for the heart, for an emotional response, as well as for the mind. Poetry is concentrated language, so how the poem expresses thoughts is extremely important. Don't be afraid to read a poem aloud and slowly. You will probably have to read it more than once to grasp its message fully.

As you read a poem, ask these questions:

- Who is speaking? Is the poem first-person, or is it a third-person speaker?
- What is the occasion?
- Is it a monologue of one person speaking to another? Is it an elegy or a remembrance honoring the dead? Is it a lyric or an ode that meditates on a particular subject? Is it a narrative poem that tells a story?

- What is the tone, the mood, the atmosphere that the poem expresses? Does it suggest floating through the air? Is it a dirge or lament? Does it have a military beat? Does it express longing or joyful praise?
- Is the language of the poem stately, colloquial, humorous, or mysterious, or can you characterize it in another way?
- What literary techniques does the poet use (see the list in the analysis of fiction)?
- Are there important thoughts that are unexpressed in the poem, such as any background information that it assumes?
- Is it effective in generating the desired emotion, attitude, or memory in you?

Poetry traditionally utilizes the rhythm of words, called meter. The determination of meter is called scansion or scanning the lines. Traditional poetry also uses rhyme to produce a particular emotion. Rhyming can occur at the end of lines (end rhyme) or within lines (internal rhyme). Approximate rhyme uses words that sound similar but do not rhyme exactly. Blank verse has a defined rhythm but does not rhyme. Free verse does not use consistent rhyme or meter. At this point, simply take note of how the poem's use of words, rhyme, and rhythm affect you.

When you are called upon to analyze a poem, use your responses to these questions to write an essay that addresses the main points of the poem. Analysis tends to focus on the mind, but remember to include your heart-response to the poem as well.

## *The Cat of Bubastes* G. A. Henty

This historical novel tells the story of Amuba, prince of the nation of Rebu, a nation located on the Caspian Sea. The story takes place during the reign of Pharaoh Thotmes III in ancient Egypt, when the Israelites were slaves there. An Egyptian army conquers Rebu and Amuba is taken prisoner. He and his servant Jethro are chosen to serve in the household of Ameres, the high priest of Osiris. Amuba becomes friends with Chebron, the son of Ameres, and Jethro becomes the servant of Mysa, the sister of Chebron. They meet a Hebrew girl, Ruth, who becomes a companion of Mysa.

**Plot.** We can outline the plot of the book according to Freytag's pyramid:

- Exposition: The invasion and siege by the Egyptians in Rebu receive an extended discussion. The battle is the narrative hook: how will the battle turn out, and what will be the result?
- The inciting incident is the defeat of the Rebu and Amuba and Jethro being taken as captives to Egypt.
- The rising action includes the journey to Egypt, getting to know life in Egypt, and the introduction of Ameres' religious views. A complication is the opposition to Ameres by other priests of Osiris. A foreshadowing takes place with Chebron killing a crocodile, which is seen as a sacred animal by the people of that region.

The story contains several conflicts: the initial conflict between Egypt and Rebu; conflict between where Amuba and Jethro are as captives in Egypt and where they want to be in Rebu; conflict between the family of Ameres and the family of Ptylus; and conflict between Ameres and other priests, especially Ptylus, about religious views. Another foreshadowing is the murder of Chebron's older brother.

- The climax occurs when Chebron accidentally kills Mysa's cat, which had been chosen to be the next sacred Cat of Bubastes. There is conflict over how the Egyptian people and the other priests of Osiris see the accidental killing of the cat versus the way that Ameres and the non-Egyptian characters view it.
- Falling action includes the mob attack and killing of Ameres because he is blamed for the death of the cat; the kidnapping and rescue of Mysa; the deaths of Ptylus and his son Neco; Amuba meeting Moses, who rescues him from danger; and the escape of Amuba, Chebron, Mysa, Ruth, and Jethro from Egypt and their arrival in Rebu. After the initial battle scene in the book, events settle down except for the undercurrent of opposition to Ameres among the priests in the temple; following the climax, the story involves a great deal of strife, conflict, and desperate travel.
- Resolution: Amuba gains the throne of Rebu as rightful heir. The pretender to the throne is killed and the Egyptian occupation army is intimidated into leaving Rebu.
- Denouement: Amuba marries Mysa, Chebron marries Ruth; Amuba institutes new policies and teaches the people about the one true God; the main characters look back on how good came from what they saw as the tragic event of the death of the Cat of Bubastes.

**Characters and Characterization.** The novel has mostly stock, flat characters. They generally know the right thing to say and do in every situation. Jethro is the strong, able servant. Amense is the languid, superficial, disinterested mother. Ameres and Ptylus fill the good guy-bad guy roles. Characterization takes place primarily by what the characters say and do themselves. The characters do not change much during the story, except that the younger main characters grow in their religious understanding. The description of Moses fits how he is described in the Bible, such as when he stopped two Hebrews from fighting before his flight to Sinai.

**Narrative.** Henty tells the story in chronological order as an omniscient third-person narrator. He mostly reports the events (perhaps influenced by his career as a journalist), although overall there is an optimistic tone that suggests good will come of it all in the end. He does not use much imagery. The characters generally speak the way Victorian Englishmen would speak.

The book shows the problems of false religion, however long and deeply held those views might be. It is hard for us to believe that the accidental shooting of a cat could cause such turmoil, but that reflects the hold that many pagan beliefs have on people. How can you overcome this in evangelism? How can you effectively show someone that his or her dearly-held beliefs are illogical? The story is a reminder of the need to be open to the truth, even at the cost of one's religious traditions. Compare the concerns that the other priests of Osiris have about Ameres' views to the concerns expressed by Demetrius the silversmith in Acts 19 about the impact that Paul's views might have on respect for Artemis and on the silversmith business. The book shows how malevolent leaders can manipulate people and capitalize on their fears and ignorance.

Characters occasionally speak lines of wisdom or observations about life: “No country is so rich that it does not desire more”; “Some day, my son, things may be managed differently; but at present kings who have power make war upon people that are weaker than themselves, spoil them of their goods, and make slaves of them”; “so far as I can see the gods give victory to the bravest and most numerous armies”; “try to be worthy of the rank to which you were born.”

The novel has plenty of action. Through the book we learn a great deal about life in ancient Egypt, including its religious practices and beliefs, the way society was structured, and funeral practices (dealing with the dead was very important to ancient Egyptians). Henty supplies much detail about military action, ancient Egypt with its cities and great structures, and hunting.

The book honors God by explaining how belief in the One True God underlies belief in many deities. Ameres believes in one God, and other main characters come to this belief. Ruth already believes in God when she is introduced. An example of providential working is when Moses appears on the scene, the one man who could help and who could grasp the concept of a single God. At one point Ameres gives his view of “how religion first began upon the earth.” What he says can be taken to mean that man came up with the idea of religion instead of the Biblical presentation that God existed, He created man, and man responded to Him.

The topic of the book is how a prince is taken captive to Egypt and manages to escape despite the turmoil caused by the accidental killing of a cat that was considered sacred.

The theme of the book is about handling reversals in life. One would think that little good could come from military defeat, being taken captive, and the killing of a sacred cat; but much good came about as a result of those setbacks. As you experience setbacks, remember to keep trusting God and to keep doing what is right.

## *The Art of War* Sun Tzu

*The Art of War* is a collection of wisdom and advice by Sun Tzu, a Chinese military commander, strategist, and adviser to emperors from about 500 BC. The purpose of the book is to give guidance on fighting battles, but it also provides as much or more guidance about being so well prepared that an army does not have to fight at all. The book encourages a mindset, an outlook. It is written as a series of short instructions, almost like proverbs.

Sun Tzu says that war is governed by five factors: the moral law (or the tao, eternal truth, the way things are; we will see this term again in *The Abolition of Man*); heaven (weather, times, and seasons); earth (geography, distances, and security); the commander (having wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage, and strictness); and methods and discipline (training, organization, supply lines, and control of expenditures). All factors that relate to war, including military, geographic, and diplomatic, are interrelated and should be part of the planning that is done.

The five essentials to victory are: knowing when to fight and when not to; knowing how to handle superior forces and inferior forces; unity of spirit throughout the army; being prepared and waiting to take the enemy when he is unprepared; and making sure the military is capable while avoiding interference by government rulers.

Here are some of the central or repeated topics to which the book speaks:

**The purpose of an army.** We usually think that the purpose of an army is to win battles. Sun Tzu says that the purpose of an army is to be victorious. Therefore, it is better if an army can win without fighting—if the enemy can be convinced of the hopelessness of engaging in battle at all.

To fight in order to conquer means casualties on your side and the chance of victory by your enemy. Conquering without fighting is the better route. This seems counterintuitive, the very opposite of what you might normally think about an army; but it is true. This fact demonstrates the value of carefully thinking through military strategy before engaging in war. The Art of War helps military leaders do this.

**Planning.** Military personnel are constantly engaged in drills, practice, war games, and other methods of preparation. Military leaders cannot wait until a threat arises and then say, "Let's get ready." The military has to be ready at all times. The Art of War emphasizes this need for preparation. Make many calculations before you fight, it says, and avoid battle if you are not ready. Prepare your own forces; this is the factor that you can control. Enforce discipline among the troops. This is certainly one aspect of building an effective army, but Sun Tzu also says that a commander will have the greatest success if he treats his soldiers with respect and as his own sons and not with an uncaring attitude toward them.

**Knowledge.** Know yourself and know your enemy. This will provide the best chance for success. If you only know yourself, you will lose half your battles. If you know neither, you will never win. Read your enemy's movements and take him seriously. Spies are essential to obtaining the information you need.

**Strategy.** Good strategy includes knowing when not to fight. Sun Tzu understands that time is an ally and that waiting can be the best strategy for ultimate victory. George Washington led the Continental Army to victory in the Revolutionary War not by engaging in a long string of successful military campaigns against the superior British Army, but by knowing when to choose his battles and when not to fight. Ulysses S. Grant led the Union Army to victory over the Confederate Army under Robert E. Lee in 1865 not by constant attacks but by repeated flanking moves that minimized Union losses and wore down the Confederates' ability to fight.

*The Art of War* advises military leaders to seek battle only after it has been won. However, when you attack, strike hard; there is no wisdom in starting slow and building intensity. Military leaders must plan, but they must also be flexible and adapt to different circumstances; otherwise the soldiers will lose confidence. Knowing how to use the geography of a region is your best ally. Avoid wetlands, for instance. Fighting is difficult there, and disease is more likely. Make no mistakes. This is obvious, but the point is to plan adequately so as to minimize mistakes.

**Deception.** All warfare is based on deception, says Sun Tzu. One reason for the success of the D-Day landing in France in World War II was that the Allies transmitted false information for the Germans to pick up that indicated the landing would take place at Calais. Dummy landing craft were even dispatched there. This move tied up part of the German defense forces while the real landing took place further west. Try to draw the enemy into attacking by appearing to be unprepared; this will tax their strength and make them unprepared for what you are really able to do. You can be direct to fight, Sun Tzu says, but you must be indirect to win. Know the enemy but keep yourself hidden from him. Of course, the enemy might have the same plan. This is why knowledge of the real situation on both sides is so important.

**Avoiding prolonged war.** Wage war quickly, Sun Tzu says. Siege warfare, although it has often been employed, is not good strategy or a good use of resources. There is no benefit from prolonged warfare. When war is prolonged, the costs increase, the army has to hold the land that has been taken, and the soldiers become vulnerable. Holding land and serving as a de facto government is not the purpose of the military. This says nothing about the courage and skill of the troops on the ground, but instead it speaks to policy and overall strategy for the conduct of a war.

**Leadership.** Effective leadership is essential in winning a war. Military leaders cannot try to lead the army the way political leaders govern a country; politics and popular opinion have no place in military operations. Leaders must use subordinate officers well. Controlling a large group is best accomplished by controlling many small groups, which means that subordinate officers must be well-trained and on board. Leaders must not give orders that soldiers cannot obey.

*The Art of War* has not guaranteed continual military success for the Chinese. China has suffered its share of defeats, and its military and government have been subject to corruption and poor leadership from time to time. However, China's longevity as a country is remarkable. Its resilience through many eras and difficulties is probably due at least in part to the philosophy put forth in this book.

The relevance of this ancient text to today's world was affirmed by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in his 2011 book *On China*. Kissinger says that *The Art of War* "remains a central text of military thought." It was influential in the thinking of Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong, twentieth-century Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek, and Ho Chi Minh, the leader of North Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Americans would do well to understand this ancient volume of military advice in order to understand more completely the China to which the United States relates today.

## *Julius Caesar*

# William Shakespeare

The topic of this play is the conspiracy against the life of Julius Caesar and the consequences of his assassination. The theme is the pitfall of ambition and the serious consequences that result when ambitions clash.

### **Plot.**

- Exposition: Caesar returns to Rome in triumph. The people cheer him, but Flavius and Marullus oppose him. This sets out the basic conflict of views about Caesar.
- Narrative hook: The soothsayer tells Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March," foreshadowing that something bad is coming.
- Inciting incident: Cassius talks to Brutus about joining the conspiracy. The issues about Caesar and the attitudes of these two men are revealed in detail.
- Rising action: Caesar is suspicious of Cassius but is not afraid for his safety. Caesar rejects a crown when it is offered to him. A stormy night serves as another warning of bad things coming. Cassius convinces Casca to join the conspiracy, which gives the sense of a growing movement. The conspirators meet, and Brutus agrees to become their leader. Caesar's wife has a fearful dream. An animal sacrificed does not have a heart. Another warning is prepared for Caesar. The tension builds.

- Climax: Caesar is assassinated.
- Falling action: Competing eulogies are given about Caesar. Mob violence and chaos follow. A triumvirate of Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus is formed to rule Rome, though the latter is quickly shut out. Brutus and Cassius have conflict but reconcile. Caesar's ghost appears to Brutus, predicting Brutus' imminent death. The two sets of leaders meet and exchange insults. The armies fight.
- Resolution: Cassius dies, "Caesar revenged." Brutus dies.
- Denouement: Octavius and Antony praise and honor Brutus and celebrate their victory.

**Characters and Characterization.** The play is an intense character study. Characterization takes place in several ways: by what the characters say and do, and by what is said about them by others.

The protagonists or main actors are Cassius and Brutus. The antagonists are Antony and Octavius.

- *Julius Caesar* is arrogant. He does not heed warnings and believes that he is immortal. He wants power despite his refusal of a crown. He is suspicious of Cassius. The provisions in his will seemed generous, but perhaps he was ambitious to be well-thought-of after his death. Caesar is not the main actor in the play, but he is the main factor in the play. Everything that happens revolves around him (or his legacy).
- *Brutus* is at war within himself. He is a friend of Caesar but does not like Caesar's ambition or the prospect of Caesar's autocratic rule. Brutus is unsure about what to do to stop it, but Cassius has an idea about what can be done about it. Cassius persuades Brutus to join the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar, and Brutus convinces himself that it is the noble thing to do. Brutus is ambitious to see Caesar stopped. He would like to have power himself but sees himself as too noble and honorable to pursue it himself. Is Brutus honorable? Is it honorable to assassinate someone in pursuit of what you believe to be a higher goal?
- *Cassius* is ambitious for power and does not hide the fact. He is willing to be deceptive to do whatever it takes to persuade people to join his cause. He believes that Caesar is actually weak despite having a strong exterior. Cassius believes that Brutus is weak enough to be persuaded despite his noble exterior.
- *Antony and Octavius* are ambitious to retain the power that Caesar had built for himself and to which they see themselves as rightful heirs. Antony is a clever orator and skillfully persuades the crowd to agree with him. He proposes to amend Caesar's will to benefit himself and Octavius in order to help with their expenses. As it turns out, Octavius succeeds Caesar and becomes Augustus.

- *The People* cheer for Caesar at the beginning of the play. They are turned against Caesar by Brutus' speech, then reverse course when they hear Antony's speech. The crowd becomes an unruly mob just wanting to kill somebody, even if it is a poet mistaken for a conspirator. Throughout the play, the crowd wants to see certain things happen, so they are portrayed as ambitious also. The masses are presented as unreliable and easily swayed. Should an ambitious leader really seek power on the basis of the approval of the crowd, when the people are so unreliable and can be so poorly motivated? Or does Shakespeare do an injustice to the people as a whole by how he portrays them?

Conflicts abound in the plot, which is one reason why the play is so gripping and continues to speak to readers today. People have conflicting attitudes about Caesar, Brutus has conflict within himself, at times Cassius and Brutus have conflict and Antony and Octavius have conflict. Brutus and Cassius are never really together in their motivation for what they are doing, so they are in continuing conflict despite pursuing the same goal.

**Narration.** A play does not usually have a narrator the way that prose fiction does, although some plays, such as *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder, do have a narrator as one of the actors. The story of a play is told not through the eyes of one character but through the words and actions of all the characters on the stage. Plays do usually have main characters, however. In this play, Julius Caesar is the major presence even though he is not on stage the most. Brutus and Cassius are the central figures in the story.

Notice the literary devices that Shakespeare uses in this play:

- powerful and vivid vocabulary ("The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings."),
- puns ("all that I live by is with the awl"),
- hyperbole (overstatement for effect, as "he doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus," which is also a simile),
- alliteration ("to mask thy monstrous visage"),
- synecdoche (using a part for the whole, as in "lend me your ears"), and
- apostrophe (addressing one who is not present, "Caesar, thou art revenged")
- symbols (such as the storms portending evil events)
- monologues that reveal the thoughts of characters
- irony (as when Cassius describes Caesar's weaknesses even as he is considered to be a god).

Most of the lines are in iambic pentameter (a form of meter that has five feet or sections per line, with the second syllable of each foot emphasized: — ' — ' — ' — ' — '). Some couplets rhyme:

And af'ter this' let Cae'sar seat' him sure',  
For we' will shake' him, or' worse days' endure'.

Shakespeare also includes some delightful anachronisms (references to things that were not present in a given time period), such as characters hearing a clock strike or using candles for light. Rome in the first century BC did not have clocks or candles.

*Julius Caesar* was first performed in London in 1599. Elizabethan England was fascinated with the ancient world, so the subject would have been a popular one. This interest in Rome has continued to today, as has interest in Shakespeare's character study set in that era. The play is more than history (and in some minor details it is not exactly accurate history). It is an inquiry into what motivates people and into power and political rivalries. These are universal battles, and as a result the play will always have an audience among people who seek to study and understand why people do what they do and who are willing to look into their own hearts to struggle with the same questions.

## *The Imitation of Christ* Thomas à Kempis

I don't remember ever thinking about godliness, holiness, and righteousness when I was a teenager. I'm sure that I did not pursue them. I considered myself a Christian and I went to church every Sunday, but I did not systematically read the Bible. I watched a few religious television programs from time to time and read a very few religious books. The fact that you have read the assigned passages of Scripture while studying this curriculum and that you have read *The Imitation of Christ*, even if you have done nothing else, puts you far ahead of me on those counts when I was your age.

As important as these things are, however, going to church, reading the Bible, and reading *The Imitation of Christ* are in a sense superficial. They are outward actions. Sitting in a church service does not make you a Christian any more than sitting in a garage makes you a car. You can read words on a page without letting them go very deep into your heart. You can go on mission trips, serve others, preach and lead devotionals, and have a good reputation and still not be who you should be in the Lord. I know that is true because some of that describes who I was.

The key issues for you and for me are whether we are following Christ with our whole hearts, whether we are growing in Christlikeness, whether we are by the Spirit putting to death the deeds of the flesh as Paul says in Romans 8:13, and whether we are loving God with our whole being and loving our neighbor as ourselves. You can probably add several other key indicators as they are expressed in Scripture that define what it means to be living as a Christian and to be growing in Christ.

These issues involve where we are spiritually, but they also involve where we are headed. Someone can be a Christian but be slipping away from faithfulness. Someone can be a Christian but not have grown very much since coming to Christ. Someone can be immature in Christ but be headed in the right direction. Perhaps one of the greatest temptations is to put on a good front but be shallow or even evil inside. No one grows in Christ on a constantly upward trend. We all stumble, wander around, and regress from time to time. The question is where you are headed in your basic direction.

I make this emphasis at this point in the curriculum because the books you have read so far are interesting for their literary and historical value, but reading *The Imitation of Christ* introduces deeper and more important issues. If you have read the book only for its literary merits and if you only have an intellectual grasp of its historical significance as a medieval devotional work, then you have done the book, yourself, and the Lord a great disservice. *The Imitation of Christ* is a book that can change your life; at the very least, it can nudge you into the path you need to be

on in terms of your walk with the Lord. Perhaps another book or another experience will do this more effectively for you, but moving along the right path in the right direction is something that needs to happen in your life.

*The Imitation of Christ* has been an inspiration to millions for centuries for good reason. It offers many powerful insights about devotion and submission to Christ. Here are just a few that stand out to me:

“Never read thou the word that thou mayest appear more learned or wise; but study for the mortification of thy sins, for this will be far more profitable for thee than the knowledge of many difficult questions.” (Book III, Chapter 43, Section 1)

“Hateful fancies always rush in more easily than they depart.” (Book III, Chapter 43, Section 2)

Thomas says that a man is not great because people think he is great. Quoting Francis, Thomas says, “What each one is in Thine [God’s] eyes, so much he is, and no more.” (Book III, Chapter 50, Section 8)

Thomas says not to be surprised if you cannot grasp everything that God does. “If the works of God were of such sort that they might easily be comprehended by human reason, they should no longer be called wonderful or unspeakable.” (Book IV, Chapter 18, Section 5)

*The Imitation of Christ* was written by a monastic for his fellow monastics, but people in every walk of life can profit from it. The book is a collection of devotional thoughts. The last part, with ideas related to communion, is the section with the most consistent theme throughout. Thomas is saying in the book that devotion to Christ will help a person become more like Christ, will give him peace, and will lead to the life that he ought to be living. In some ways living by the principle of imitating Christ has different demands if one is a stockbroker, a mother of six, or a server in a restaurant, as compared to the demands of living by the principle in a monastery; but every place that people live provides its own challenges and joys.

The book is not perfect. There is only one Book that fits that description. Some of the thoughts lean toward justification by works, and there are some references to doctrines related to Thomas’ own religious background. Thomas was influenced by his traditions, just as all of us are. As with any book you read, filter it through Scripture. Grow from what is in keeping with Scripture, and lay aside what is not.

The kind of quiet, thoughtful devotion that Thomas urges is not what we usually hear promoted today. It appears that many churches and Christians get their cues from the world and try to be busy and flashy. It is hard to grow when you are on the run. Here are some things that have helped me grow in Christ:

- Reading the Word. Other books, podcasts, and music might be helpful as well, but you should always be drinking from the pure, original source. Feed your mind on faith-building things. You are in a battle for your soul with the ruler of this world. You are assaulted from all sides with ideas and temptations that threaten to tear down your faith. Make it a fair fight by putting into your mind ideas that will help you grow.

- Having a regular and meaningful prayer life. Go beyond the formal times at church, meals, and family devotionals. I find that having a regular time to pray, keeping a prayer list, and using the list regularly helps me to remember people and situations and to see how God answers specific requests. It also helps my mind not to wander while I pray. I have found that praying about my struggles helps me deal with them.
- Serving others. It is easy to live in an isolated world and to be preoccupied with your own issues. Serving others (which can take many forms, such as visiting, helping, teaching, and much more) gets you out of yourself. It often helps you to appreciate what you have instead of complaining about your lot. In addition, you accomplish good in the name of Christ.
- Developing relationships with people who are walking with Christ. Watch how they live; listen to how they talk; observe how they handle problems; ask them how they have grown in Christ. The Lord lets us live in the presence of other believers so that we can build one another up; take advantage of this great gift.

In these thoughts about *The Imitation of Christ*, we have gone beyond literary analysis and into personal analysis; but that is the point of the book. To read the book thoughtfully and to consider its message is to open yourself up to the important truths of God. This is where education meets life, which is what education is all about.

## *Everyman*

The topic of the medieval morality play *Everyman* is the reality of death and judgment for every person. The theme is that everything in this life will fail you in preparing for that eventuality except good deeds.

When he receives his summons, Everyman wants to delay the journey but Death will not allow it. Everyman tries to get help from that to which he has given himself in this life—Fellowship (spending time with friends), Kindred (including a Cousin with a cramp in his toe), and Goods—but they all say that they cannot help him. They make great promises, but they forsake him in the face of Death.

Knowledge comes to help. Knowledge leads Everyman to go to Confession, where he learns to do penance. When that is done, Good Deeds becomes stronger and effectively enters Everyman's life (Goods Deeds has been prostrate on the ground, weakened by Everyman's evil deeds). Other helpers enter Everyman's life: Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and Five Wits (the five senses). They accompany him, but when Everyman comes to the point of Death they leave him. They cannot help him there. Finally Everyman comes to the grave. Good Deeds says that he will speak for Everyman, and Knowledge says, "Good Deeds shall make all sure." Everyman is welcomed into heaven, and the audience is urged to make themselves ready for the same journey that Everyman has made.

The play is a vivid reminder that indeed nothing in this world will help a person face death and judgment. All the things to which people often give themselves make great promises but fail them in the end.

The play teaches several Roman Catholic doctrines, such as the emphasis on confession and doing penance and the seven sacraments. Everyman is told that the priests administer the sacraments and that “The priest bindeth and unbindeth all bands/Both in earth and in heaven.” Knowledge mentions priests who lead sinful lives, but Five Wits responds, “I trust to God, no such may be find.” While the New Testament teaches that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26) and that we are judged “according to our deeds” (Revelation 20:12-13), we must understand those passages in the context of the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ (Romans 3:28, Ephesians 2:8). Good deeds are to be the fruit of a Christian’s relationship with Christ that is based on faith. Good deeds are not acts of merit that earn a person salvation. If an evangelical were writing Everyman, he would probably say that Jesus will see him through death or that a person’s faith in Christ will make the difference in his eternal destiny.

As in most plays, the story of Everyman is told through the words of the characters as opposed to a narrator, although a messenger and a doctor address the audience directly at the beginning and the end, respectively. The tone is one of urgency as Everyman must face the unavoidable summons of Death. No doubt the message of the play would be impressed upon the audience.

Elements of the plot:

- Narrative hook: God’s speech and His summons of Death to show Everyman the pilgrimage he must take.
- Inciting incident: Death’s call to Everyman
- Climax: Everyman goes to Confession
- Resolution: The death of Everyman

## *Here I Stand* Roland Bainton

The late Yale professor and Reformation scholar Roland Bainton wrote *Here I Stand* to help readers understand the man Martin Luther, the times in which he lived, and the profound impact of what he did. Bainton succeeds on all three counts.

The Protestant Reformation was by most accounts the watershed event in church history after the period of the early church. It changed the way Christianity has been practiced ever since. Martin Luther did not accomplish this single-handedly, but he was the single person who had the most influence on what took place. *Here I Stand* gives a good sense of the people and issues involved in the beginning and early years of the Protestant movement. The names, details, and issues that Bainton includes can be overwhelming, primarily because they were. Scholars, church leaders, and political figures all had strong ideas and were willing to voice them. The more one becomes familiar with the period, the clearer those details become. What is clear through even an initial reading of Bainton’s biography of Luther, however, is the new way of thinking that emerged. The religious and political environment changed drastically. Luther’s work affected all of Europe and eventually the world.

In the early 1500s, the Roman Catholic Church had serious issues. Many of its practices were departures from the pattern of the New Testament. The selling of indulgences to pay for the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica, which supposedly provided release from purgatory for deceased loved ones? The practice of kissing the pope’s big toe? Luther was given the opportunity

to teach at the university in Wittenberg, so in preparation he decided to read the New Testament. What he found in it was not the church of which he was a part, so he decided to start a debate over what was going on around him. The debate ignited a firestorm that swept over the Christian world.

Bainton ably discusses the theological issues that were at stake in the Protestant Reformation. A historian does not necessarily understand theology, and theologians are not always students of history. Understanding Luther and his times requires a grasp of both subjects, and Bainton brings this fuller understanding to his work. Bainton respects God and the Christian faith (he was an ordained Congregationalist minister), so he writes as a friend of the church and not as a skeptic.

For instance, the question of what constituted the true church was a major issue for the people of that day. The church that many were leaving claimed to be the one true church, but it was flawed. New fellowships were forming, but how could one know whether they believed and practiced the truth? The church in a particular province was part of the political structure. The political leader of that province, whether Catholic or Protestant, wanted to be sure that he and his people were in the right church. People had not yet developed the practice of finding a Bible-believing church and getting busy in it. With new groups and new claims emerging, being in the right fellowship and holding to the right doctrines had immense significance. Bainton demonstrates an understanding of the theology and the history involved with this issue of immense importance at the time.

We must not pass over the fact that Luther had his issues as well. He wanted the freedom to believe and practice as he saw fit, but he was not willing to extend the same level of freedom to those who disagreed with him. Luther had strong prejudice against Jews, and he approved of harsh treatment of peasants who rebelled against the local authorities. No human leader will be perfect; this is why we profit as much as we can from human leaders but answer only to God. Luther was another human leader who did much good and also made some mistakes. How important his mistakes should be in evaluating his work is a question on which many disagree.

If the information is available, Bainton might have included more about Luther's childhood and early life. Those years in a person's life often have a huge impact on what a person does in adulthood. Anyone with the strong drives that Luther had must have had important influences early on. In addition, Bainton includes a few phrases that cause concern that he could have expressed differently. In Chapter 7, Bainton says that Renaissance man might have wondered "whether his valor might not be thwarted by the goddess Fortuna or whether his destiny had not already been determined by the stars." He also wonders in the same chapter if Luther believed that "wisdom lies with the simplicity of childhood, and man might better lay aside his skills until the gods have decided the issues of the day." Neither Luther nor Bainton believed in "the gods," but these phrases do raise the eyebrow of a Christian. In Chapter 13, Bainton says, "Nature cannot reveal God," although he does say that creation "reveals the handiwork of God, if one has the eye to see." Paul says in Romans 1 that God's eternal attributes are so obvious in Creation that men are without excuse in their rebellion against Him.

Bainton taught at Yale University for many years. He wrote thirty-two books, including thirteen after he retired from teaching. *Here I Stand* is his best-known work; it has sold over one million copies and has been in print since it was published in 1950. Reading and understanding *Here I Stand* is a vital step in having a grasp of the Protestant Reformation.

# *A Tale of Two Cities*

## Charles Dickens

Right or wrong, good or bad, up or down, in or out, one way or the other. We live in a world of dualities, choices, alternatives. The Bible speaks of light and darkness, the narrow way and the broad way, life and death, and other distinct alternatives, so we know that this duality is real. Sometimes we can see the difference between the two choices clearly, while at other times the difference is not so clear. Sometimes the duality is within the same person, perhaps at the same time and perhaps at different times in his life.

*A Tale of Two Cities*, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” is a study in dualities; and in those tensions, those conflicts, lies a gripping tale. The list of dualities in the book is long: London and Paris, Jarvis Lorry the proper banker and Jerry Cruncher the not-so-proper employee, Jerry Cruncher the bank errand-runner and Jerry Cruncher the grave-robber, Doctor Manette under the spell of the Bastille and Doctor Manette in his right mind, the corrupt nobility and the desperate peasantry, Charles Darnay breaking free from the status quo and his uncle the Marquis defending the status quo, the upright Charles Darnay and the slovenly Sydney Carton, the aimless Sydney Carton and his partner the striving C. J. Stryver, the evil Madame Defarge and the innocent Lucie Manette, the vengeful Madame Defarge and the staunch defender Miss Pross, the upright Doctor Manette and the cruel Evremonde brothers, the spy Roger Cly and the spy Roger Cly, the aimless Sydney Carton and the determined Sydney Carton. With these dualities are many conflicts: political, personal, and moral.

A second theme in the novel is that of resurrection or redemption. Doctor Manette is “recalled to life” when he is released from prison. Charles Darnay is rescued from death three times: by Sydney Carton at his trial in England, by Doctor Manette at his first trial in Paris, and by Sydney Carton again as he awaits execution (the trial in England foreshadows Carton’s saving Darnay after his final trial). Jerry Cruncher works as a “resurrection man” or grave robber, but he is resurrected from that activity as he is convinced that he needs to give it up. Sydney Carton is redeemed from a wasted life to making the ultimate sacrifice for Charles and Lucie Darnay. Life and death is another central duality in the book.

The novel is set in the time of the French Revolution. The narrative runs from 1775 to 1793. We see the impact of great events on individual lives, and we see the difference that individuals (such as Miss Pross and Sydney Carton) can make in the midst of those great events. The story is told by an omniscient narrator. Most of the characters are round and well-developed (one of Dickens’ strengths is his vivid characterization), although Lucie and Darnay are somewhat flat and the Marquis is an archetype. Some characters change over the course of the story: Doctor Manette begins weak and endures several changes but emerges strong, Jerry Cruncher reforms and shows significant character, and Sydney Carton changes dramatically. The characters intertwine, as they usually do in a Dickens novel (and as people do in real life). Characterization takes place mostly by what the characters do. For instance, we get a picture of Jarvis Lorry by how he dresses, and we understand Sydney Carton by how he carries himself.

The development of the plot is as follows:

- Narrative hook: the mysterious opening scene, the phrase “recalled to life”
- Exposition: events leading up to Darnay’s trial in England
- Inciting incident: Darnay’s trial in England—Carton’s rescuing of him, the intertwining of many of the characters

- Rising action: events leading up to Darnay's final trial in Paris
- Climax: Darnay's trial in which he is condemned to die
- Falling action: events following Darnay's condemnation
- Resolution: Carton taking Darnay's place
- Denouement: the final scene and the thoughts of Darnay expressed before his execution

Here are some other topics related to the story:

It might be hard for us to imagine, but throughout history some people have hated others enough to kill them or to want them killed. The people in Jerusalem and their leaders wanted Jesus to be killed. During the religious wars in Europe following the Protestant Reformation, people killed others because they were Catholic, Lutheran, or Anabaptist. During the time of the French Revolution, the aristocracy saw the peasantry as little more than animals and the revolutionaries rejoiced at thousands going under the guillotine. In the novel, this kind of hate is personified in Madame Defarge. Her bitterness at the Evremonde family is understandable, but she really has no hope in her life. She is consumed by hate and would never have been at peace. Hate does this to people.

The scene of the wine cask breaking open is one of great symbolism. It shows the hunger of the French people, both literal and political. It also foreshadows how blood would flow in Paris in a few years.

With whom do you sympathize in the novel? With the French people, yes, but then you recoil at their hatred. You can be afraid of Madame Defarge's intensity, but then you find out why she feels the way she does. Lucie has done nothing to bring on the suffering that she endures. Doctor Manette has given his life in service to the right, and he has suffered greatly because he has done so. Charles Darnay tries to do what is right, and he also endures great suffering. As you think about other characters, you respond emotionally to them and sometimes with mixed emotions.

What do people do when they are called to give of themselves and perform great acts of service and self-sacrifice? Jarvis Lorry served others throughout his life. Charles Darnay risked his life by returning to France to help a former family servant. Doctor Manette was willing to risk everything to save his son-in-law. Mrs. Pross fought Madame Defarge at the risk of her life. Sydney Carton recognized that he had the opportunity to follow through on his promise to Lucie that had been a foreshadow of what was to come: "For you, and for any dear to you, I would do anything." What will you do when such is called for from you?

We would hope that Charles Darnay, his family, and all whose lives were affected by Sydney Carton's sacrifice would live differently as they remembered what he did. Consider also what your response is to Christ who died for you.

## *North and South* Elizabeth Gaskell

The topic of *North and South* is the effect of industrialization. The industry in Milton affects everyone: the Hales' lives there, the health of Mrs. Hale and Bessy Higgins, the Thorntons, the Higginses, Mr. Bell from a distance, and the owners and workers. The theme of the book is prejudice and overcoming it. Margaret Hale is prejudiced against the north, industry, and industrialists. John Thornton is prejudiced against the rural south and anyone who is not an

industrialist. Mrs. Thornton is prejudiced in favor of her son and against anyone who is not in favor of her son. Frederick Hale is a victim of prejudice and has to remain out of the country. The factory owners are prejudiced against the workers, and the workers are prejudiced against the owners.

These prejudices lead to conflicts: Margaret and John, the workers and the owners, Mrs. Thornton and the unworthy world, the struggle that Mrs. Hale and Margaret have about moving to Milton. Another major conflict is Margaret's turmoil within herself for the lie that she tells to protect Frederick. A lesser conflict is Mr. Hale's doubts about Anglican doctrines.

If you haven't learned this lesson about life yet, you will: a big part of life is about loss and how to handle it. Many people suffer loss in the book. Margaret loses her close relationship with Edith, the Hales lose their beloved Helstone, Mrs. Hale loses her health and her life, Bessy loses her health and her life, Mr. Hale loses his wife, Mrs. Thornton has lost her husband and (she fears) her social standing, the workers fear losing their work and do lose out to Irish strike-breakers, the owners fear losing their profits, Frederick loses his freedom and his country, Margaret loses Bessy and her parents and Mr. Bell, and John suffers a business reversal. However, we grow through struggle, and one effect of these losses is the breaking down of many of the prejudices described in the book. Margaret comes to appreciate life in Milton and the strengths of John, John comes to appreciate the workers more, and Mr. Higgins comes to respect John and Margaret. Even Mrs. Thornton changes some.

The story of North and South is told by an omniscient narrator. Gaskell portrays many believable characters, and we learn about them by what they say and do themselves but also by what others say about them. Some characters, especially the protagonist Margaret and the antagonist John, experience significant growth and change during the story. Mrs. Hale is a stock weak mother, while Mrs. Thornton is a stock overbearing mother. Edith Shaw, her mother, and John's sister Fanny are stock superficial females. There are many more mature and emotionally healthy females in the world than you would know from nineteenth-century British literature. We learn about Frederick's role in a naval mutiny and his resulting inability to be in the country through his mother's telling about it to Margaret. This is an emotionally effective way to convey a story that has such a profound impact on the family.

Elizabeth Gaskell's descriptions of the Thornton home and of John's personal appearance show a great eye for detail (try to grasp Mrs. Hale's defiance at decorating with white in a smoky industrial town). She also conveys an excellent grasp of the economic issues involved with the industrial revolution, especially in the initial conversation between John and Margaret. Gaskell ably conveys the rights and the responsibilities of both owners and workers.

**Plot.** Now it is time for you to think about the elements of the plot in North and South, identifying some of the elements of Freytag's Pyramid. What do you think are the scenes that play the pivotal parts listed below? There are several possible answers. Since these are your opinions, there are no wrong answers, although some answers are better than others. Possible answers are in the answer key.

- Narrative hook:
- Inciting incident:
- Climax (This one is a challenge: Is it the strike scene? the scene at the railway station? John's failing in business? The question to consider is: To what scene does the previous narration lead up to and the following narration lead away from? Give your reasons for your answer.):
- Resolution:

Finally, a few other elements of the plot deserve special mention:

**Relationships.** Mr. and Mrs. Hale clearly love each other, but something is lacking in the relationship that prevents Mr. Hale from telling his wife the deepest thoughts in his heart. Another key relationship is that between Margaret and Bessy. Both are nineteen when they meet, but they have lived very different lives. What has been the effect of these different experiences on each one, and how are they affected when they develop a relationship with each other?

**The lie.** A major part of the plot is the lie that Margaret tells to the police inspector to cover Frederick's presence in the country. She is tormented by guilt over it. Mr. Bell dismisses it, but it turns out that Frederick would have been safe even if she told the truth. The temptation is great to cover up the truth to protect yourself or someone you love, but that approach always complicates matters and causes problems. John's ability to forgive the lie shows his character and his love for Margaret. Thinking about Margaret's failing in this might lead you to think about your failings and what you need to do differently.

**The ending.** The last chapter of the book is a brilliant and delightful ending.

## *The Hiding Place* Corrie ten Boom

When you read *A Tale of Two Cities*, one question we asked was, "What do people do when they are called to give of themselves and perform great acts of service and self-sacrifice?" In *The Hiding Place*, you read about real people who did that in the midst of the worst crisis of the twentieth century.

*The Hiding Place* is a first-person memoir by Corrie ten Boom, written with popular Christian authors John and Elizabeth Sherrill and published in 1971, twenty-six years after the end of World War II. Their motivation is to tell Corrie's story faithfully and effectively, to encourage faith in God today, and to teach about the Savior's love and power. Their purpose is to honor Jesus Christ; to tell the story of His faithfulness; to remind people of the terrible evil of Nazism and the German concentration camps; and to honor those who gave their lives, especially Corrie's father and sister. Their message is that God was faithful during that time and that He always is, even in the darkest days.

Among the amazing passages in the book are her father's confidence that "there are no if's in the kingdom of God," that everything has a purpose in His divine and perfect plan—a belief that was severely tested during the war and the camp experiences; Corrie and Betsie giving thanks for the fleas in their concentration camp room and then realizing that the fleas enabled them to serve and teach more freely because the guards did not want to enter the room; and Corrie's dramatic meeting after the war with an SS guard from one of the camps. The narrative brings together the wisdom that her father shared with Corrie, her sister's shining faith, and Corrie's testimony of the hand of God that brings about good in the midst of terrible evil.

The story unfolds as powerfully as a well-written novel, with the added impact that the story is true. In fact, we can outline the book according to Freytag's Pyramid:

- Exposition with a flashback: Corrie's early life; narrative hook: the growing threat from Germany
- Inciting incident: German invasion of the Netherlands
- Rising action: the ten Booms' experiences harboring Jews

- Climax: arrest and removal to a concentration camp
- Falling action: Corrie's experiences in the camps
- Resolution: Corrie's release from the concentration camp
- Denouement: her later ministry, being able to forgive the SS guard

This suggests a reason why the Pyramid structure is used so often in fiction: things really do happen this way.

The story has plenty of conflict, including the Germans versus the Jews, the Germans versus the Dutch, the concentration camp guards versus the prisoners, and the struggles of faith within Corrie herself. The people in the story (in fiction they are characters, but these are real people) are well-portrayed; you come to believe that you know these people.

This analysis began with a question. Many other questions might come to your mind as you read the book, possibly including these:

*Why did the Germans hate Jews? Why do some people hate other people? Have people learned nothing?*

*What was it like to live in the occupied Netherlands?*

*What was it like to hide Jews in your home at the risk of your own life and freedom?*

*What would I have done if I had been in that situation?*

*How did people survive the concentration camps?*

These questions and others might prompt you to do further reading about the Holocaust.

You might wonder at the evil in the world and why some people are so cruel. But then you hear about amazing people who do amazing things because of their faith in God, and you are reminded of our amazing God who is still in control and working His will. This is the message and the hope that Corrie ten Boom wanted to share with you through this book.

## *Animal Farm* George Orwell

**Historical Context.** In the early twentieth century, the wealth and political power of Russia were concentrated in the hands of the royal family, the nobility, and a small inner circle of political and financial leaders. The vast majority of people were peasants who struggled to produce enough to survive. Some Russians were attracted to the ideas of Karl Marx, who called for the workers of the world to throw off their shackles of oppression and to come together to govern and run their nations and their economies by sharing all things in common. Marxist ideas came to be called Communism. Democratically elected governments were not part of Russian experience. In the tumultuous year of 1917, a group of Communists led by Vladimir Lenin seized control of the government of Russia and declared a Communist state.

Many on the political left in the United States and in other countries had long criticized capitalism and had advocated socialist (government-controlled) economic policies. These individuals cheered the Communist takeover of Russia. Over the next several years, the Soviet government invited certain people from the United States and other countries to come to the

Soviet Union and see for themselves the supposedly wonderful changes that the Communist leaders were instituting. The Soviets hoped that these visitors would go back to their home countries and laud what they described as the new Soviet workers' paradise. The Communists had a stated desire to extend their socialist revolution to other countries.

These Westerners received selective tours of new factories and model collective farms. They heard propaganda about how well everything was working. Many did offer glowing reports of their visits to Russia. For instance, the American writer Lincoln Steffens returned from his visit in 1919 and made the comment, "I have seen the future—and it works." Throughout the life of the Soviet Union, many on the political left praised and defended the Soviet Union, saying things such as: they are making great strides, they had so much to overcome, socialism is far superior to the greed of capitalism, the United States is an imperialist nation and the Soviets are just protecting themselves from the threat we pose to them, we shouldn't get involved in their internal domestic affairs, and so forth.

During Communist control in the Soviet Union, the government kept tight control on people and information going into and coming out of the country. They blocked the distribution of Western newspapers and books. Later they prevented the broadcast of Western radio and television programs in the Soviet Union. The Communists also published propaganda for the world and their own countrymen to read and see. They produced glowing reports about Soviet farm and industrial production and how happy the Russian people were. These claims were not true. The Soviet government told their own people false information about the United States, saying for instance that American workers were poorly paid and portraying the United States as an aggressor nation around the world. In addition, the Soviets rewrote history, teaching their schoolchildren among other things that the Allies would have lost World War II had it not been for the Soviet army and that the countries of Eastern Europe wanted the Soviets to come in and take over after World War II.

Meanwhile, the socialist economic system was not working. Farms and factories run by bureaucrats in Moscow did not produce what the Russian people wanted and needed. Millions of people were starving and dying because of a lack of food. Millions of Christians and millions of political opponents (real and suspected) were imprisoned, tortured, and executed. The Soviet secret police spied on Soviet citizens and kept tight control on what people said, where they went, and what was published. The Soviet Union called its member states republics and held elections for a representative assembly, but there was only one candidate for each office, and he or she was handpicked by the unelected inner circle of the Communist Party.

When the Soviet Union fought Germany on the side of the Allies in World War II, the West did not fully know the extent of Soviet oppression and totalitarian control. The idea that was emphasized during the war, even by Allied governments, was simply that the Soviet Union were joined with us in the battle against the Nazi threat.

George Orwell was a socialist who did not agree with the Communist totalitarianism of the Soviet Union. He knew enough to realize the true aims and practices of the Soviet government. In August of 1945, near the end of the war, he published *Animal Farm*. The book tells in allegorical form what had taken place in the Soviet Union. Orwell wanted the world to know about it. He wanted to warn the world about the deceptive evil of totalitarianism. In addition to its specific indictment of the failed, unjust, brutal, and deceptive Communist regime in the Soviet Union, we can learn important lessons from the book about political power, propaganda, and injustice in general.

## Examples of Allegory in *Animal Farm*

- Manor Farm Czarist Russia
- Mr. Jones Czar Nicholas II
- Old Major perhaps symbolizes Marx and Lenin. The period of Lenin's rule is passed over in the book.
- Moses, the tame raven Russian Orthodox Church. Moses is always talking about Sugarland Mountain (heaven).
- Horses (especially Boxer) the proletariat, workers. The workers in Russia exchanged one form of oppression under the czar for another under Communism.
- Mollie the middle class bourgeoisie, whom the Communists claimed were only interested in wealth and ease and whom the Communists accused of being a big part of the problem that workers faced
- Animal Farm the Soviet Union. The farm was supposedly run by and for the animals (the Soviet people), but in fact it was governed by the pigs (the Communist Party).
- Seven Commandments tenets of Communism, which were altered when the Party saw fit. The changes to the commandments represent the Big Lie, which included justifying changes to the tenets of Communism when the Party saw fit. One such change in the book is when the pigs become an authoritarian ruling class.
- Pigs the Communist Party, the special class that actually ruled the Soviet Union in the name of the rest of the people
- Battle of the Cowshed Western verbal attacks on the Soviet Union
- Napoleon Stalin
- Snowball Trotsky (who wanted to extend the Communist Revolution to other countries, allegorized in the book by Snowball wanting to send pigeons to other farms). Stalin and Trotsky were rivals. Stalin gained the upper hand in political power after Lenin's death and became leader of the Soviet Union. Trotsky went into exile and was used by Stalin as a scapegoat for problems. Stalin eventually had Trotsky murdered.
- Squealer Communist propaganda operation
- Dogs Secret Police or KGB, used to intimidate Russian citizens into submission
- Windmill efforts at industrialization in Communist Russia

- Destruction of the windmill failure of Communist central planning. In the book, the collapse of the windmill was blamed on Snowball; it could not possibly have been the result of any failings by the pigs. Russian officials always had a scapegoat for failures instead of admitting the failure of their own policies.
- Major's skull on display Lenin's Tomb in Moscow, where Lenin's body was on display in a glass coffin
- Forced confessions by animals political purges in the Soviet Union to eliminate enemies (real and supposed) and to intimidate the people
- Continual lack of food failure of central planning. The disappearance of milk and other scenes involving the pigs getting the best of everything symbolize the party leaders acquiring wealth and privilege in a land supposedly dedicated to equality, illustrating the phrase, "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others."
- Pigs becoming like humans Party leaders taking on characteristics of the capitalists and other world leaders they supposedly despised
- "Beasts of England" (song) "The Internationale," a Communist anthem
- Hoof and horn flag hammer and sickle flag of Communism
- Foxwood England, perhaps the United States also
- Pilkington leaders of democracies who ignored Russia's threat
- Pinchfield Nazi Germany
- Frederick Hitler
- Establishing trade with the humans the Soviet government admitting the need of what non-Communist countries produced
- Whymper diplomatic recognition by other countries. In the book, the sheep tell him that their rations had increased. This represents propaganda given out to other countries.

*Literary Analysis.* Now let's analyze the book as a work of literature. Give brief answers to the questions below about the elements of literary analysis. Suggested answers are in the answer key.

#### Plot

1. What is the narrative hook in the exposition?
2. What do you see as the inciting incident?
3. What is the climax in the story?
4. What is the resolution before the denouement?
5. What lines of conflict do you see in the plot?

## Narration

1. What kind of narrator is used?
2. How is the story told?
3. What is the setting?
4. What imagery is used?
5. What is the mood or tone?
6. Does the narrator use dialog?

## Characterization

1. What literary technique does the author use to describe the characters?
2. Do you think the characters in general are round or flat?
3. How does characterization take place?

How would you express the topic of *Animal Farm*?

How would you express the theme of *Animal Farm*?

# *Bridge to the Sun* Gwen Terasaki

What fills or dominates your life and the life of your family? Perhaps it is farm life, the activities of the children, caring for an elderly parent, or some other overarching reality. For Gwen and Terry Terasaki, what dominated their married life was war.

Gwen Harold was born in 1907 in East Tennessee. In 1930 she visited Washington, D.C., and met Hidenari Terasaki, a thirty-year-old Japanese diplomat whom Gwen called Terry. They were married the next year, and their daughter Mako was born the following year. Gwen and Terry spoke of building a bridge of understanding between their two countries during a time when diplomatic relations were deteriorating.

The family lived in Japan, China, and Cuba during Terry's diplomatic postings. He served in the Japanese embassy in Washington again in the period leading up to Pearl Harbor. Terry dreaded the thought of war and did what he could to avert it. The family was deported to Japan and lived there for most of the war, enduring much hardship. After the Japanese surrender, Terry was appointed an adviser to the Japanese emperor and served as a liaison between the palace and General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Allied Commander in occupied Japan.

Gwen and Mako returned to the United States in 1949 for Mako to go to college and to become more familiar with her mother's home country. Terry died in Japan in 1950. Not long before his death, Terry encouraged Gwen to write a novel based on their lives. Instead, she wrote this memoir, which was published in 1957. The book received wide acclaim. A movie based on the book was released in 1961. Gwen died in 1990. Mako has been active in promoting international understanding and justice. One of Mako's sons has also been active in promoting international peace. More information about the family is available at the website [bridgetothesun.org](http://bridgetothesun.org).

In *Bridge to the Sun*, Gwen wanted to honor and show her love for her husband and to tell her unusual story. It is a fond, longing recollection of a life filled with hardship and sacrifice, family love, learning about people and manners in various countries, and the trials of diplomatic service in the period surrounding and including World War II. She wrote a few years after

Terry's death, but the memories—both joyful and painful—are obviously still fresh within her. The sadness hangs heavy throughout the narrative. No doubt she wondered about what might have been if there had been no war and if Terry had lived longer. The prose is mostly descriptive, but it does include some dialog.

A particular value of the memoir is the different perspective that it offers about the war. We usually hear about Pearl Harbor, the European theater, the battles in the Pacific theater, and the domestic side in the United States. Here is the experience of an American, married to a Japanese, living in Japan during the war. The war cost the Japanese people a great deal. This is also true for all of the countries under Axis control as well as the Allies. If political leaders could beat their swords into plowshares, we might have fewer wars. No wonder Gwen and her family have worked for international peace and understanding. Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go.

## *Cry, the Beloved Country* Alan Paton

What do you do about hard, unpleasant things around you? What do you do about something that is not right in the country that you love, that you ache for and want to be better, that you want to succeed and to be a home for all of its people? What Alan Paton did was to write a powerful novel about redemption and to dedicate his life to helping the reforms he hoped for come to reality.

The South Africa portrayed in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a complex society. The racial divisions are much more complicated than simple whites versus blacks. The many languages used reflect cultural pride but tend to keep people apart. Whites had ruled the land for many years and used (many would say abused) black labor without giving blacks equal opportunities. A significant tension is the calm rural, tribal life compared to the bustling and dangerous urban life. Much of the unpleasant part of urban life is a result of natives moving from villages to the city for work, forgetting their roots, and becoming involved in immoral and illegal activities. Many in the white minority fear natives. Natives fear the power of whites. As Paton says in the book, fear rules the land.

The characters in the book are complicated and thus realistic. Stephen Kumalo is a minister, he believes in God, and in many ways he is a good man; but he commits wrongs in the book. His brother John is an advocate for greater justice for blacks, but he works to deny justice for his nephew Absalom in order to protect his own son. Gertrude is sorry for the wrongs she has committed in her life. She agrees to return to the village and thinks about becoming a nun; but in the end she leaves her child and disappears back into the life of the city. Absalom is involved in an armed robbery and kills a man, but he is sorry for what he has done and wants to do what is right for his girlfriend/wife and their child.

One key issue that Paton identifies is the breakup of tribal village life. As one character puts it, the white man broke the tribe and it cannot be mended. A character in the book also says that when people go to Johannesburg from the villages, they do not come back; they are lost. It is true that Europeans exploited the lives and labor of natives and denied them equal rights, and that these policies had a harmful effect on the natives. Decisions and policies have consequences in the lives of real people, some of which are unforeseen. But did the Europeans' treatment of blacks cause black crime? Each person is responsible for his or her actions. It is

too easy to blame the actions of others for one's own wrongs. Gertrude and Absalom both decided to move to the city; one can only wonder what their lives would have been like had they remained in the village.

A complex problem does not admit to easy answers, but even in complex situations people can do good. Paton shares his dream of people working together for the betterment of all. The young son of Arthur Jarvis coming to the village and learning Zulu symbolizes the bridging of racial and language barriers. Some people in the book do good in difficult situations, such as the white man who gives Stephen and Msimangu a ride in his car during the bus boycott, and the lawyer who takes Absalom's case pro Deo (meaning for God; in the U.S. the term is pro bono publico, for the public good; in both cases the legal work is done without charge). Many characters express faith in God. The commitment by James Jarvis to help the village, motivated by his son's death, is the clearest example of people working together for the good of all. In a broken and imperfect world, broken and imperfect people must do good for others.

Finally, the experiences and responses of Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis exemplify redemption, bringing good out of bad. Both men are fathers who needed to learn about their sons. Stephen Kumalo learns about his son while Absalom is still alive but when his days are numbered. Stephen enters a difficult situation and brings about good: he encourages and reconciles with his son, and he takes in the son's pregnant wife as his own daughter. James Jarvis learns intimately about his son only after the son has died, but his son's death and what James learned about his son's passionate support for equality and justice motivates James to do what he can to bring about greater opportunity for natives. The two sons come together in tragedy; the two fathers come together because of the tragedy and work to leave a better legacy for others. The fathers give comfort to each other when they come together. One father is black, the other father is white; one native, the other European. The same struggles, failings, griefs, and hopes come to each man; are we really that different?

### **Plot**

- Topic: Life and racial conflict in a South African village and city
- Theme: Redemption, as God and people bring good out of what is bad
- Setting: village of Ndotsheni, and the urban area of Johannesburg
- Conflict: Between the races, between the village and city ways of life, within Stephen Kumalo himself, in Kumalo's family (how the lifestyles of his sister, brother, and son differ from his own)
- Archetypes: man on a quest, good versus evil (These comments are not criticisms, but indications of how the book reflects the deep questions of life.)
- Narrative hook in the exposition: Stephen Kumalo receives a letter urging him to come to Johannesburg.
- Inciting incident: Stephen's arrival in Johannesburg, being cheated by a young man, then finding people who want to help him
- Rising action: Stephen's experiences in Johannesburg
- Climax: The murder of Arthur Jarvis and arrest of Absalom Kumalo

- Falling action: James Jarvis learns about his son's pursuit of racial and economic justice; Stephen meets James Jarvis; Absalom is convicted of murder; Absalom marries the mother of his child; Stephen, Gertrude's son, and Absalom's wife return to Ndotsheni; Mrs. Jarvis dies
- Resolution: James Jarvis dedicates himself to helping the village of Ndotsheni
- Denouement: Life begins to change in Ndotsheni; hope is given to the people there, including Stephen, Gertrude's son, and Absalom's wife and child

## Characters

- Protagonist: Stephen Kumalo
- Antagonist: Stephen's brother John
- Protagonist's confidant and mentor: Theophilus Msimangu
- Hero: James Jarvis; also Stephen Kumalo to a great degree
- Scapegoat: Absalom Kumalo alone is convicted of murder.
- Dynamic characters: Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis change considerably; Absalom changes also.
- Characterization is complex. It is accomplished by what people say and do and what is said about them. The main characters are round and believable.

## Narrative

- Narrator: Third-person omniscient, focusing on Stephen Kumalo
- Narration: Chronological, much dialog
- Mood, tone: Sad and thoughtful, but hopeful
- Style: Written in a way that reflects the way that different groups in South Africa speak
- Imagery: Descriptions of the land: much is beautiful and fertile, but the land of the village is dry and unproductive
- Symbols: Msimangu's first name, Theophilus, means lover of God. Stephen's son is named Absalom, the name of King David's son who rebelled against his father in the Bible. Arthur Jarvis' books about Abraham Lincoln, the liberator of slaves in America, convey Arthur's commitment to racial justice. The storm with its rainfall near the end of the book represents renewal of hope in the village. The milk that James Jarvis sends symbolizes his dedication to help the people of the village. Arthur's young son coming to the village and learning Zulu symbolizes the coming together of the races in peace. The book ends on the day Absalom is executed but with the sun coming up, symbolizing the dawn of hope.

# *The Abolition of Man*

## C. S. Lewis

One day, when our son was in the fourth grade in a public school, my wife and I were having one of our regularly-scheduled conferences with his teacher. At one point in the conversation, the teacher (with whom we did not see eye to eye on several matters) made a reference to something that students should learn or should do; and she said, “Should—now that’s a funny word.” We had placed our son’s education in this person’s hands, and this situation was one of the reasons why we decided to homeschool our children.

The situation I have described is exactly what C. S. Lewis is addressing in *The Abolition of Man*. The starting point for Lewis’ three lectures is his consideration of the 1940 English textbook, *The Control of Language*, by Alex King and Martin Ketley, which Lewis calls *The Green Book*. The text was written for the English equivalent of American high school students. The textbook dismissed traditional values and the notion that ideas, events, and actions merit our approval or disapproval. In other words, the book rejected the concept of natural law or objective truth—right and wrong, good and bad, the “shoulds” of our culture—and the appropriateness of sentiments such as beauty, courage, and patriotism.

Lewis says the book teaches students that sentiments are only feelings and thus are not important. Lewis argues that emotions or sentiments are important because they are part of who we are as humans and because they reflect the reality of universal truth: that we can be appropriately awed or angered or impressed. Two problems with the denial of sentiments, according to Lewis, are that (1) the textbook at this point teaches philosophy and even theology instead of the use of language in composition and (2) it plants the idea in students’ minds that traditional sentiments or values are to be dismissed or ignored.

Is there good? Is there oughtness? Is there natural law? Is there objective merit beyond what an individual simply might like or prefer? Lewis says that there is, and that it is recognized and accepted in cultures and religions around the world. It is what he calls the Tao. Some, like the authors of *The Green Book*, deny this concept of objective merit or worth. One irony is that, while these values are denied on one hand, on the other hand we hear many calls for more courage, ingenuity, friendship, compassion, and so forth. “We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst,” says Lewis. We can’t teach truth as God’s truth in public schools; but the need for values and standards still exists, so we see programs such as “Character Counts” being implemented in public schools.

A second and more insidious irony is that those who deny absolutes do so because they want to impose their own set of absolutes, their own list of moral imperatives and “shoulds,” a list they believe to be superior to the traditional ones. Thus they cannot reject the Tao without appealing to the Tao (a universal set of standards) themselves. These people would say that we should not accept traditional, Biblical morality, for instance, because that outdated morality reflects absolutes that do not exist. Instead, we should (note the word) accept modern standards of morality that are more “tolerant” and “accepting.” But if there are no absolutes, who says that tolerance and acceptance are values to be defended and insisted upon?

We can see this philosophy in the words of Barack Obama. In his 2006 book *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama says that implicit in the structure of the Constitution and in the idea of ordered liberty “was a rejection of absolute truth, the infallibility of any idea or ideology or theology or ‘ism,’ any tyrannical consistency that might lock future generations into a single, unalterable

course." This rejection of absolute truth is something with which he indicated agreement in the book. However, as President, often when Obama gave speeches promoting a proposal or program, he said that the proposal was something Congress should enact because, as he put it, "it's the right thing to do." So, according to Obama, on the one hand there is no absolute truth, but on the other hand his ideas are "the right thing to do." Implied but unsaid was the idea that to oppose his program was to oppose what is right, which of course would be wrong. If Obama believes that a single, unalterable course is wrong, does this mean that he can envision the possibility that the Federal government would one day not have a health care system, or accept gay marriage, or fund abortion? I seriously doubt it. I think he would say that these things are absolutely and permanently "the right thing to do." He rejects absolute truth, but he believes that he knows what is "the right thing to do."

Lewis says that the result of the denial of appropriate sentiment and permanent oughtness will be the destruction of the society that accepts it because it abolishes man as who he is and who he is intended to be. It will remake man from God's image into man's image, or perhaps more accurately, into the image of those people who have the power to impose their standards on others. If we replace adherence to the Tao with adherence to the current ideas of some people, then this generation will exercise power over this and later generations by declaring what is and is not right and acceptable instead of admitting a continuing, multi-generational recognition of what is permanently and eternally right and acceptable.

Where can this kind of faulty thinking be instilled most effectively into the next generation and into generations to come? Schools. The explanatory subtitle on the cover of my copy of Lewis' book (a subtitle which the publisher wrote, not Lewis) is *How Education Develops Man's Sense of Morality*. Exactly. And who is in charge of public schools? Those who promote this kind of innovative standard. Do not be confused. They do not deny moral oughtness. They deny traditional moral oughtness. They cannot deny that moral oughtness should exist in any form because to deny it is to enunciate a moral oughtness. Even if someone says that society should not have any moral standards, they are stating a "should," an expression of value that they believe "should" guide all people, and that is a permanent moral standard.

Lewis presented these lectures in 1943. He speaks as an educator and a Christian who is concerned about the trend of denying absolutes that he had seen in society and education and specifically in the approach of *The Green Book*. Much of his argument is based on logic. His references to the teachings of many world religions are not a statement that all religions are acceptable, but that eternal truths are so much a part of who we are as mankind that they are found in religious systems around the world. Sometimes you might find it difficult to follow his line of reasoning, but his main points are squarely on target.

Despite Lewis' warning, and despite the trends that we see in our society, there is still reason for hope. Lewis' books are still in print and sell well. Many other resources are available that explain and defend traditional morality and objective truth. Every year hundreds of thousands of American students in homeschools and Christian schools are taught from the perspective of a belief in absolute truth. You can be aware of this trend toward the denial of traditional morality and decide that you will not be swept along by it. This will help you and your family to be guided by the truth that God has built into the universe.